

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 10, 2011

Agenda Item: Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2012-2015--Supplemental

Division: Fish and Wildlife (Fisheries) **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

All but two of the proposed fishing regulations for 2012-2015 were voted on by the FWP Commission on October 13. The two regulations included the proposal to eliminate bull trout harvest and/or reduce the number of lines on Lake Koocanusa and a proposal to eliminate bull trout harvest on Swan Lake. At the October Commission meeting, FWP proposed to delay final action on both lakes until after bull trout redd surveys were conducted in October to better understand the population trajectories.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The proposed fishing regulation changes for 2012-2015 were approved by the FWP Commission on August 18 for a 30-day public comment period. During the comment period, FWP received 449 comments via an online survey, and 39 comments by email or handwritten letter which included a petition with 99 signatures and a form letter with 27 signatures. In addition, 12 open houses were held around the state soliciting comment. A summary of the public comments is provided after each regulation proposal in the "Proposed fishing regulation changes for 2012-2015--Supplemental."

Alternatives and Analysis

The FWP response to public comments is provided in the "Proposed fishing regulation changes for 2012-2015--Supplemental" document. These responses include a recommendation on whether to keep, modify or drop each proposal and a justification for each recommendation. Based on a review of these comments, FWP staff has modified one of these regulation proposals and has incorporated this change into the attached regulation package.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends eliminating the bull trout harvest on Lake Koocanusa and instituting a catch-and-release season due to the low number of bull trout redds observed in the Kootenai River drainage above Libby Dam. The proposal to reduce the number of lines from 2 to 1 has been eliminated due to public disapproval and the judgment that the elimination of bull trout harvest alone may be sufficient to halt the bull trout declines. The proposal to eliminate the harvest fishery on Swan Lake is still being proposed by FWP to the Commission due to the steep and continuing decline in bull trout redd numbers.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt FWP's proposed final regulation changes for Lake Koocanusa and Swan Lake for the 2012 fishing season.